

News Release

For immediate release

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Governor Inslee proclaims Diabetes Alert Day

OLYMPIA – Diabetes costs Washington billions of dollars each year, and the percent of Washington residents with diabetes has nearly doubled over the last two decades. Gov. Jay Inslee [has proclaimed today American Diabetes Association Alert Day in Washington](#), and he joins state elected officials focused on health care policy in calling on adults statewide to take a simple [online risk assessment for type 2 diabetes](#), the most common form of diabetes. The assessment is available in English and Spanish.

While only physicians can diagnose any type of diabetes, taking the online assessment can help adults determine their risk level before talking to their doctor about prevention through diet and exercise and lifestyle changes.

“Diabetes is a serious condition and a serious challenge for Washington’s families—and it impacts people from all walks of life,” said Inslee. “Encouraging all adults to take responsibility for their health to prevent and control type 2 diabetes is a reasonable first step. I encourage all adults statewide to take the online assessment and talk to your doctor.”

Sometimes referred to as the silent epidemic, type 2 diabetes in adults is often present many years before it’s diagnosed. [The 2014 Washington State Diabetes Epidemic and Action Report](#)—produced by the Health Care Authority, the Department of Health and the Department of Social and Health Services at the direction of the Legislature—estimates that nearly a third of Washington residents are at risk for or live with type 2 diabetes or its pre-cursor, pre-diabetes.

Diabetes in Washington led to direct medical costs of \$3.75 billion in 2012—this figure is expected to mushroom to \$5.39 billion (in 2012 dollars) in 10 years. The percent of adults with diabetes has nearly doubled in Washington since the early 1990s. Nearly 95 percent of all diabetes cases are type 2.

The report makes a number of recommendations, which the state agencies are reviewing for further implementation on top of programs under way:

- Ensure all appropriate populations know their risk and have access to a [Diabetes Prevention Program](#) and [self-management education](#).
- Increase access to safe and affordable active living (read more about the [Healthiest Next Generation](#) initiative to reduce childhood obesity).
- Ensure people with diabetes and gum disease have access to guideline-based oral health treatment.
- Enhance care coordination for people with both diabetes and mental illness.
- Use [Community Health Workers](#) to help people with the greatest needs.
- Support the plan for a [Healthier Washington’s](#) investment in analytics, interoperability and measurement to stay on top of the data and create policy driven by data.

Sen. Randi Becker, R-Eatonville, chair of the Senate Health Care Committee, has scheduled a work session at 10 a.m. today in Olympia to review the findings and recommendations from the state report.

“My Senate colleagues, who share my concern for the health of Washington residents, have already given their unanimous support to my bill (Senate Bill 5689) to continue to require state health care agencies to work together to identify goals and benchmarks to reduce the incidence of diabetes and improve care and outcomes associated with the disease,” said Sen. Becker. “We all have a responsibility to learn our risk for this disease. I encourage every adult in our state, especially women, to talk to a doctor, visit a local office of the American Diabetes Association or take the simple online test.”

“As a healthy diabetic for nearly 40 years, I am pleased with the report we’ve developed to address diabetes while also developing individual agency plans to: (1) Reduce the incidence of diabetes in the state; (2) Improve diabetes care; and (3) Control complications associated with diabetes,” said Rep. Laurie Jenkins, D-Tacoma. “The scope of the diabetes challenge and epidemic facing our state requires we all work together. Every adult in Washington hearing this message or reading it owes it to themselves to take this seven-question survey and then share the results with your doctor to talk about how to control and prevent type 2 diabetes. Take it for the sake of your family and loved ones.”

“Beyond the statistics affiliated with diabetes, there are real lives,” said Heather Berg, former American Diabetes Association, national youth advocate and Washington diabetes advocate. “To sum it up, when diabetes is winning, the people of Washington are losing.”

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About Washington State Health Care Authority

HCA oversees the state’s top two health care purchasers — Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) and the Public Employee Benefits Board Program. We work with partners to help ensure Washingtonians have access to better health and better care at a lower cost. For more information, visit www.hca.wa.gov.

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